



Medical Waste Management

Guidance Document

This guidance document outlines and clarifies acceptable practices for healthcare facility personnel who handle, store, and dispose of medical waste.

Background

The primary reason for establishing and maintaining proper management practices for medical waste is to prevent the transmission of disease and injury to persons routinely involved in medical waste management, including healthcare facility workers and waste haulers.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Bureau of Waste Management (BWM) provides oversight and guidance on how to properly contain, treat, and dispose of medical waste, not on what specific waste items qualify as medical waste. A generalized definition of medical waste, based on the need for management and disposal, is provided below. Decisions on what specific waste items qualify as medical waste are the responsibility of the facility that has generated the waste.

Definition of Medical Waste

[K.A.R. 28-29-27](#) defines medical services wastes as waste materials which are potentially capable of causing disease or injury and which are generated in connection with human or animal care through inpatient and outpatient services. This determination is made by the facility generating the waste, not BWM. These wastes will be referred to simply as “medical waste” in this guidance document.

Medical waste does not include:

- Pharmaceutical waste
- RCRA hazardous waste (this is not the same as biohazardous waste)
- Radiological waste

Applicability to Human Healthcare Facilities

K.A.R. 28-29-27 applies to facilities that deliver inpatient or outpatient care. This includes care provided in settings such as hospitals, clinics, and offices of physicians and other healthcare providers.

For human healthcare facilities, medical waste refers to red bag or biohazard waste, i.e., waste that has been placed in containers that are labeled or color coded in accordance with OSHA requirements [29 CFR 1910.1030(g)(1)(i)]. If you are uncertain if a particular waste should be placed in a red bag or other biohazard container, consult with the staff at your facility responsible for health and safety and/or infection prevention and control (often referred to as an Infection Preventionist (IP)). You may also reach out to the KDHE Healthcare-Associated Infections and Antimicrobial Resistance Program at 785-296-4167 or kdhe.HAIAR@ks.gov for assistance/guidance.

Applicability to Animal Healthcare Facilities

K.A.R. 28-29-27 applies to veterinary clinics and any other facilities or businesses that provide inpatient or outpatient care of animals. This regulation does not apply to livestock producers who treat their own animals.

For animal healthcare facilities, medical waste means wastes that are potentially capable of causing disease in, or injury to, humans.

Management of Medical Waste

Medical waste at human and animal healthcare facilities must be managed according to the following standards, which are summarized in the flowchart at the end of this document.

Containers

The medical waste must be placed in containers that meet the following requirements.

- The container must be constructed to contain the contents, including fluids.
- Sharps containers must be rigid and puncture-proof.
- The container must be labeled or color coded and otherwise in compliance with the OSHA standards for bloodborne pathogens in 29 CFR 1910.1030.
 - As mentioned above, human healthcare facilities are already doing this.
 - Animal healthcare facilities must label or red-bag containers of waste if the waste is potentially capable of causing disease in, or injury to, humans.

Containers of medical waste must be moved or transported in a manner that will prevent injury and the transmission of disease.

Processing

A healthcare facility may process medical waste to destroy disease transmission potential using autoclaving, microwaving, chemical treatment, or other methods that meet accepted industry standards. This activity does not require the healthcare facility to obtain a permit. (Alternatively, the healthcare facility may send the waste to a permitted medical waste processing facility; see the following section.)

If the processed waste no longer has the potential to cause disease in humans or injury to humans, the waste is no longer considered medical waste. This waste may be managed and disposed of as ordinary municipal solid waste. **Note:** Many landfills require a special waste disposal authorization (SWDA) for disposal of medical waste that has been processed. SWDAs are discussed in the following section.

Disposal of Medical Waste

In Kansas, medical waste may be disposed of by any of the following methods:

- Obtaining a SWDA (see [K.A.R. 28-29-109](#)) and transporting the medical waste to a permitted municipal solid waste landfill. A SWDA may be requested by:
 - Sending an email to KDHE.SWDA@ks.gov; or
 - Calling 785-296-0681;
- Contracting with a medical waste company for transportation of the medical waste to a permitted medical waste processing facility or, with a SWDA, to a permitted municipal solid waste landfill;
- Discharging liquids to a sanitary sewer that is connected to a secondary sewage treatment plant. The wastewater utility should be contacted for approval before this method of disposal is put into practice;
- Sending combustible solids to a permitted incinerator, who may dispose of the ash in a municipal solid waste landfill; or
- Sending the medical waste to a hazardous waste disposal facility that has a permit issued under K.A.R. 28-31-270.

For additional information regarding the proper management of solid or hazardous waste in Kansas, or to obtain a special waste disposal authorization, you may visit the Bureau of Waste Management website at www.kdhe.ks.gov/Waste or contact the Bureau at: 785-296-1600, kdhe.bwmweb@ks.gov, or the address at the top of this document.

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Revised 11/20/2018: updated Hospital/Medical/Infectious Waste Incinerator (HMIWI) regulation language

Revised 03/06/2020: removed HMIWI language; updated labeling/color-coding requirements

Revised 07/11/2022: clarified definition, applicability, labeling/color-coding, processing, disposal

Medical Waste Management Process

Abbreviations:
LF = municipal solid waste landfill
MW = medical waste
SWDA = special waste disposal authorization
Processed = no longer has the potential to cause disease in, or injury to, humans

